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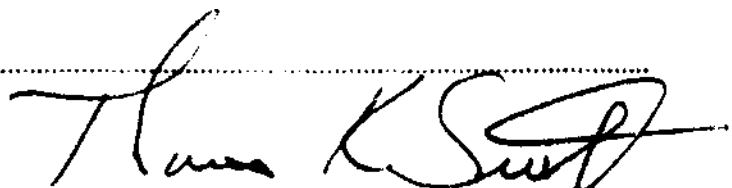
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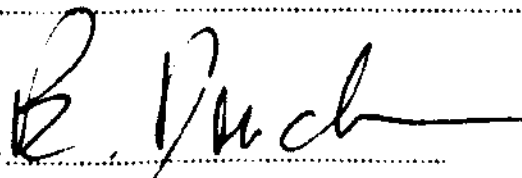
ENTITLED... Situation-Specific Expectancies in Person Memory

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**Situation-Specific Expectancies in Person Memory**

by

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in Liberal Arts and Sciences**

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### Abstract

Research has demonstrated that information which is inconsistent with an expectancy is processed more extensively than is consistent or irrelevant information. This research, along with some relevant models of person memory, is reviewed and the relationships between the research and these models are discussed. The models are limited in their applicability, however, since their supporting research has focussed exclusively on general expectancies. Consequently, there are no existing models of person memory that can account for expectancies which are specific to a particular situation. The present study found that situation-specific expectancies not only exist, but that recall patterns for these expectancies are markedly different from those associated with general expectancies. Since previous theories can not account for these results, a new model is proposed to specify how social information is organized in memory relative to situation-specific expectancies.

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For years, social psychologists have been interested in the way we process information about other people. Unfortunately, social information is so complex that it is difficult to study without using an approach in which different variables are systematically manipulated in a series of experiments. In fact, recent progress in this area is due largely to the use of so called "cognitive" methodology in the area of social psychology. The outcome of this combination is an area commonly referred to as person memory.

The most useful approach of psychologists in the area of person memory is to assert a model, derive predictions from it, and test the predictions. These models have usually been of the associative network variety and have some common characteristics. They assume that information which has been encoded into long term memory is organized in a particular way. This organization can be represented by idea nodes and associative links which connect the idea nodes.

One question that is frequently discussed when dealing with theories of memory concerns the relative memorability of information that is congruent, irrelevant, or incongruent with reference to a schema. If we think of a general schema as the hypothesis of a given person about the world, and an event as data, the data and the hypothesis can have three relationships. These are congruency (the data fits the hypothesis), incongruency (the data is contradictory to the hypothesis), or irrelevancy (the data does not provide any information about the hypothesis). A more precise way of thinking about these terms is on a probability continuum relating the hypothesis to the data  $P(\text{data}/\text{hypothesis})$ . If the probability is

high, the data is congruent with the hypothesis; when it is low the data is incongruent with the hypothesis, and when the probability is in the middle range (near 0.5) the data is irrelevant to the hypothesis (Hastie, 1981).

Anderson and Bower (1984) proposed an associative network memory theory in which each proposition is treated as an independent fact which does not in any way need to be integrated with other known facts. Thus, there is no meaningful difference between the way in which congruent and incongruent behaviors are processed, and both would be expected to be recalled with equal likelihood.

An elaborate set of experiments by Hastie and Kumar (1979) examined memory for information that was congruent or incongruent with an expectancy. Subjects were told that they would be asked to form impressions and recall information about fictional characters. They were also given expectancies about a target person. For example, a subject might be told that the target person was "intelligent" and then exposed to a list of behaviors that are either congruent (e.g. "won the chess tournament"), irrelevant (e.g. "ordered a cheeseburger for lunch"), or incongruent (e.g. "made the same mistake three times") with the expectancy. Hastie found that recall of incongruent items is consistently superior to recall of items congruent with the expectancy, and these in turn are better recalled than irrelevant items. Several variables have reliable effects on this relationship. When there are equal numbers of congruent and incongruent behaviors in the presentation list, there is a small but reliable advantage for incongruent over congruent

behaviors. As the set size for incongruent behaviors is reduced relative to the set size for congruent behaviors, the proportion of incongruent behaviors recalled increases, while the proportion of congruent behaviors recalled does not depend on its set size. Hastie did not examine the case in which the set size for items incongruent with the initial expectancy is greater than that for items congruent with the expectancy.

In another experiment (Hastie and Mazur, 1980), the set size variable was varied in conjunction with a level of incongruence variable. The set size factor occurred at three levels: 9 congruent behaviors and 1 incongruent, 7 congruent behaviors and 3 incongruent, 5 congruent and 5 incongruent (equal set sizes). In a pretest, subjects rated behaviors on their incongruency with a given trait. Three types of incongruent behaviors could be presented: (a) high-incongruence behaviors; (b) medium -incongruence behaviors; and (c) low-incongruence behaviors. Subjects viewed films of actors performing the behaviors. The results in the high-incongruence condition replicated those described in the Hastie and Kumar (1979) experiment. However, there was no significant difference between recall of congruent and incongruent items in the equal set size condition. In the medium-incongruence condition, congruent item recall, as in the previous condition showed no set size dependence. Unlike the previous condition, however, incongruent items in this condition also showed little influence of set size. The results of the low-incongruence condition were consistent with traditional schema theory as proposed by Bartlett (1932). In this condition, the

congruent behaviors were recalled better than the incongruent behaviors.

One possible reason for these results is that lower-incongruence items may be more irrelevant than high-incongruence items. In fact Hastie gives an example of behaviors that represent the three different conditions. If the trait is friendly, three behaviors could be (a) "hostile" (high incongruence); (b) "stupid" (medium incongruence) or (c) "intelligent" (low-incongruence). It seems as though "stupid", and especially "intelligent", are much more irrelevant to "friendly" than is "hostile".

In a subsequent set of experiments, Anderson and Hastie (1980) explored the relative rates of forgetting of congruent and incongruent behavior descriptions with the same method that was described for the other experiments. They used both filmed and sentence materials with each subject viewing 16 behavior descriptions attributed to a single character. Each list of behaviors was preceded by a trait ensemble and followed by a retention interval before the recall test. These intervals, the major independent variable in the studies, ranged from 5 minutes to 2 weeks. High, medium and low-incongruence behaviors (as defined in the previous experiment) were used. Recall of low and medium-incongruence items were unstable so only high-incongruence items will be discussed. It was found that there was no differential forgetting of congruent and high-incongruent items. Initial differences in recall (high-incongruent events better recalled than



congruent events) are preserved almost perfectly at all delays. Furthermore, this worked when films and behavior statements were used.

In sum, the results of the previous experiments indicate the following: (a) better recall of incongruent items than congruent items, (b) a set size effect for recall of incongruent items, but not for recall of congruent items, and (c) differences in recall of congruent and incongruent items are preserved over time.

#### Hastie's Associative Network Model

The model proposed by Anderson and Bower (HAM) can not explain the differences in recall of congruent and incongruent items nor the absence of a set size effect for the congruent items. Consequently, a new model was proposed by Hastie (Hastie and Kumar, 1979) in which it was assumed that incongruent items are more informative than congruent items and that informative items are subjected to a deeper level of processing than less informative items. Since incongruent items are more deeply encoded they are less susceptible to interference or decay during the retention period. Finally, deeply encoded acts are retrieved more easily than other acts during recall. The nature of this processing is such that deep encoding involves the establishment of more interbehavior links than shallow encoding. Thus, an informative, incongruent act will be linked to more other behaviors than a relatively uninformative congruent act. Retrieval, as in the HAM model, would be a random search along the paths through the memory structure. Clearly, the more paths that are connected to a particular behavior, the higher the probability of

recall. Therefore, since incongruent items have more paths connected to them than congruent items do, they have a higher probability of being recalled than congruent items (see Figure 1).

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 Insert Figure 1 about here  
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A series of experiments, performed by Srull (1981), provide strong support for Hastie's model. The first experiment tested a number of variables. A  $3 \times 3 \times 2 \times 2$  completely balanced factorial was used. The factors were type of target (individual vs. meaningful group vs. nonmeaningful group), set size (equal numbers of congruent and incongruent items vs. more congruent than incongruent items vs. fewer congruent than incongruent items), learning conditions (memory set vs. impression set), and length of delay before recall (immediate vs. 48 hours). Half the subjects in each cell were told the target was "friendly and sociable" and the other half were told the target was "unfriendly and nonsociable" (they received identical items).

The subjects in the memory set condition were told to remember the behavioral information as well as possible and that they would later be asked to recall its basic content. The subjects in the impression set condition were told that they were to form an impression of what the person or group would be like and that they would later be asked to make some explicit judgments about the person (or group).

Subjects in the individual target condition were told that each of the behaviors had been manifested by a particular individual named Peter Lacy, while subjects in the group target conditions were told that each behavior presented had been manifested by a different member of the group. Each behavior presented was associated with a different male name. Subjects in the meaningful group target condition were given the same information as the subjects in the non-meaningful group condition, except that they were also told that this group is a real one, composed of a political caucus of a midwestern state who are meeting regularly in order to select delegates to the upcoming national political convention. In contrast, subjects in the non-meaningful group target condition were not given any reason to believe that the members of the group interacted. Thus, they had little reason to try and understand the behaviors of the group members in relation to the behaviors of other group members.

The subjects recalled a much higher proportion of items immediately than after 48 hours. Furthermore, consistent with previously mentioned studies (e.g. Hastie and Kumar, 1979), incongruent items were better recalled than congruent items, which in turn were better recalled than irrelevant items.

Srull (1981) had predicted that subjects would be more likely to integrate discrepant pieces of information, and recall them better, if the pieces of information pertained to a psychologically meaningful target rather than if they did not. Consistent with this prediction, an equal proportion of items pertaining to a single

individual or meaningful group were recalled. These proportions of items recalled were each significantly greater than the proportion of items recalled about the nonmeaningful group. This suggests that people can process information about individuals or groups equally well if there is a psychologically meaningful reason to consider the group as a single unit.

It was also predicted that subjects would generally be more likely to integrate various pieces of information, and thus develop interepisode associative linkages between items when they were attempting to form a coherent impression of the target than when they were simply trying to learn the material. In general, however, this integration process should be more difficult for items incongruent with a prior expectancy than for other items. Thus, these items would be expected to be kept in working memory for a longer period of time and form a greater number of associative links than other items. A number of findings are related to these hypotheses. First, more items were recalled under incidental (impression set) than intentional (memory set) learning conditions replicating earlier indications of such a possibility (Hyde and Jenkins, 1969; Mandler, 1967). While there was no difference between the proportion of congruent or irrelevant items recalled under memory set and impression set conditions, a significantly greater proportion of incongruent items was recalled under the impression set than under memory set conditions. This suggests that items incongruent with a prior expectancy undergo additional processing when subjects are attempting to form an integrated impression of

what the target would be like.

There was also a crossover interaction between learning conditions and length of delay. Instructions to form an impression of the target person led to significantly greater recall than memory set instructions under immediate delay conditions, but there was a nonsignificant advantage for memory set subjects in the long delay condition. This could have occurred because memory set subjects may have engaged in some additional rehearsal of the items since they knew they would later be asked to recall the items. Impression set subjects did not know they would have to recall the items and therefore would be unlikely to engage in such additional processing.

These results provide strong support for Hastie's model. Several other results dealing with the order in which information is recalled were also found in this experiment.

According to Hastie's model, items that are congruent with a prior expectancy are encoded into memory by association with the abstract person node. However, when an incongruent item is encoded, it can be associated with other items as well as the abstract person node. These items can be congruent, irrelevant, or other incongruent items. This implies that the probability of recalling an incongruent item given that one has just recalled a congruent item should be greater than the probability of recalling a congruent item given that one has just recalled an incongruent item. This result was obtained in the experiment.

The probabilities concerning recall of irrelevant items are also very interesting. The proportion of irrelevant items recalled

was very low. However, when an irrelevant item was recalled the next item recalled was quite likely to be a congruent item. It may be that irrelevant items are examined in relation to congruent items to "make sure" they could not be considered relevant during encoding, thus establishing some kind of interepisode path between irrelevant and congruent items. The problem with this explanation is that it assumes irrelevant items are held in working memory for a long period of time. If this was true, the proportion of irrelevant items recalled would be quite high instead of very low. Srull's explanation is that irrelevant items are not richly integrated into the network, and thus develop few if any interitem associations. Thus, when an irrelevant item is recalled, the subject is forced to retreat to the general person node at the highest level of the hierarchy. If this is true, there should be a high probability of recalling congruent items on first attempts. This was, in fact, found. The explanation also accounts for the fact that fewer irrelevant items than congruent or incongruent items were recalled.

To summarize Srull's first experiment in this series, strong support for the superior recall of items incongruent with a prior expectancy over items which are congruent with that expectancy was obtained. This was true when the set size for incongruent items was less than, equal to, or greater than that for congruent items, and the difference is just as great after a delay of 48 hours as after a delay of a few minutes. Hastie's model predicted all the results except for the high probability of recalling a congruent item after recalling an irrelevant item.

The procedures of the second and third experiments were similar to that of the first. In experiment 2 the total number of congruent behaviors was held constant while the number of incongruent behaviors was varied and in experiment 3 the total number of incongruent behaviors remained constant while the number of congruent behaviors was varied.

As in Experiment 1, a higher proportion of incongruent items than congruent items were recalled. This was true when the set sizes were equal as well as when there were fewer incongruent items. This replicates Hastie and Kumar (1979) and Experiment 1. It was also found that the proportion of congruent behaviors recalled increased simply as a function of the number of incongruent behaviors in the list.

In Experiment 3, varying the number of congruent and irrelevant behaviors had no effect on the number of incongruent behaviors recalled. Once again, the proportion of incongruent items recalled was greater than that of other types of items regardless of the relative set sizes.

One important aspect of the Hastie model is the postulated formation of interepisode linkages between incongruent and other types of items. Such paths are formed only when the subject compares two or more behavioral episodes in working memory. One implication of this is that any procedure that requires the subject to devote part or all of his/her processing capacity to an irrelevant task will effectively prevent the formation of such linkages. In Experiment 4 subjects rehearsed the items aloud as they were

introduced. Four conditions were run: (1) no irrelevant task was required, (2) the subject was required to rehearse aloud the item presented one time, (3) the subject was required to rehearse the item two times, or (4) the subject was required to rehearse the item three times. Conditions 1-4 require more and more of the subjects' processing capacity to be devoted to an irrelevant task and thus should prevent the formation of interepisode associative links. As a consequence, it was predicted that the proportion of incongruent items recalled would decline as the number of rehearsals increased.

As usual, incongruent items were best recalled and irrelevant items were worst recalled. Consistent with the predictions, the proportion of incongruent behaviors recalled declined as the number of repetitions increased. The number of repetitions had no significant effect on the proportion of congruent or irrelevant items recalled.

These experiments are strong evidence for the superior recall of incongruent items over congruent items. Hastie's model is also supported. One problem, however, is that little of the research explored recall of irrelevant items which were generally used to control for list length effects. While it is clear that irrelevant items are not as well recalled as congruent or incongruent items, it is unclear how irrelevant items should be represented in an associative network. Consequently, Srull expanded Hastie's model to account for irrelevant items.



### Srull's Associative Network Model

Srull (Srull, Lichtenstein, and Rothbart, 1984) was able to account for irrelevant items by changing one of the assumptions of the model (see Figure 2). According to Srull, subjects comprehend incongruent episodes by relating them to other behaviors that are relevant to the dimension in question. Specifically, subjects relate incongruent acts to congruent acts and to other incongruent acts but not to behaviors that are irrelevant to the expectancy. This assumption is in contrast to the other model. Srull presents the following summary:

In sum, the theory suggests that irrelevant and congruent items are encoded by establishing associative linkages between any given episode and a higher order person node that represents the target who performed the act. Incongruent episodes also result in the establishment of such paths. In addition, however, such acts will often be thought of in relation to other relevant (i.e., congruent or incongruent) behaviors in an effort to more fully understand their implications. It should be noted that the tendency to maintain an item in working memory will be affected by a number of variables, the most important of which is the general "goal" or processing objective of the subject. For example, a subject who is attempting to form a coherent impression of the target will be utilizing a strong integration rule and will be quite likely to look for dependencies and interrelationships among the various behaviors. In contrast, a subject who is simply trying to remember the behaviors as well as possible may use a more rote rehearsal strategy in which such an integration rule is much less likely to operate. (p.7)

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Insert Figure 2 about here

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When a subject attempts to recall the behavioral information which was presented, the retrieval process underlying free recall is

assumed to be the same as that postulated by Anderson and Bower (1974). The search process starts at the person node at the highest level of the network and follows associative paths until an episode node is activated. After the subject recalls an episode, the search continues from that node to traverse the associative paths until another episode node is activated. When more than one path emanates from a particular node, the search is random and sequential. In other words, only one of several paths is chosen and this choice is random. This process continues to operate until the same episode node has been activated several times. This is the "clogging effect" in which the subject begins to retrieve repeatedly episodes that have already been reported to the experimenter. The subject interprets this as a signal that further retrieval will be difficult or impossible and terminates the search process.

Srull (Srull et al., 1984) performed a series of experiments to test this modified model. A number of predictions were made on the basis of this model of which the most obvious is that incongruent events should be remembered better than congruent events.

The design in the first experiment was a 2 x 4 completely balanced factorial with the following factors: learning conditions (memory set vs. anticipated interaction set) and number of overt repetitions (0, 1, 2, or 3). The subjects in the memory set condition were told to remember the behavioral information as well as possible and that they would later be asked to recall its basic content. The subjects in the anticipated interaction condition were told to form an impression of the target person because they would

later meet him. At that time they would be asked to present arguments that would be effective in changing the person's opinion about a controversial social issue.

The subjects were either (a) simply given the appropriate instructions, (b) given the instructions and told to rehearse aloud each item one time loud enough for the experimenter to hear it, (c) given the instructions and told to rehearse each item aloud two times, or (d) given the instructions and told to rehearse each item aloud three times.

Several predictions were made and confirmed. Rehearsing the items should interfere with the subject's ability to think about individual behaviors in relation to one another, and therefore the subjects should have more difficulty forming interepisode links as the number of rehearsals increases. This should affect the proportion of incongruent items recalled to a large extent since it is the establishment of interepisode links between incongruent items with congruent items and other incongruent items that causes incongruent items to be recalled better than other items. Recall of congruent items should also be affected, but not as much as recall for incongruent items. The reason for this is that superior recall of congruent items over irrelevant items is due, according to the modified theory, to interepisode links between incongruent and congruent items. When the formation of these links is interfered with, recall of congruent items should decrease. Recall of irrelevant items should not be affected by rehearsal since irrelevant items do not have any interepisode links to other items,

and thus cannot be affected by interference with the formation of such links. The number of rehearsals should not affect memory set subjects in this way. Since subjects in this condition are not expected to attempt to integrate the information, the decrease in number of behaviors recalled should be approximately the same for each type of item.

Some correlational predictions were also made by Srull. He predicted that in the anticipated interaction condition, there would be a much higher correlation between the number of incongruent and the number of congruent items recalled than between the number of incongruent and irrelevant, or between the number of congruent and irrelevant items recalled. This would be true because irrelevant items are isolated in the network and not involved in the formation of interepisode associative paths. On the other hand, few interepisode paths are formed in the memory set condition, therefore, the three correlations mentioned should be approximately equal in this condition.

In Experiment 2, Srull involved the use of individual differences to examine the underlying assumptions of his model. The rationale is, if a model postulates a particular mechanism, skill, or theoretical process "that can be measured reliably outside of the situation for which it is serving its theoretical purpose" (Underwood, 1978), the model can then be used to predict differences in performance among individuals, as well as the more common use of predicting differences in performance across (experimental) conditions.

The individual difference variable referred to as the "need for cognition" has been investigated over the past thirty years. Cohen, Stotland, and Wolfe (1955) described it as "a need to structure relevant situations in meaningful, integrated ways. It is a need to understand and make reasonable the experimental world" (p. 291). Srull describes it as referring "to an individual's tendency to think about things in relationship to one another and attempt to resolve any ambiguity that exists in a situation." (p. 18). Cacioppo and Petty (1982) have developed an empirically-based assessment device of the construct that has psychometric properties.

Incongruent items are better recalled than other items because there is a higher probability that they will form interepisode paths with other items as a result of being retained longer in working memory. According to Srull, "this would suggest that individuals who characteristically are more likely to think about events in relationship to one another will develop many more associative links between items than individuals who ordinarily are less likely to think about relationships between events" (p. 19). Since incongruent items form more links with other items than congruent or irrelevant items do, Srull predicted a strong, positive correlation between individual differences along the dimension and the number of incongruent items recalled. Since irrelevant items are isolated in the network, it was predicted that individual differences along the "need for cognition" dimension would not be a good predictor of the number of irrelevant items recalled. It is important to note that these predictions are for subjects in an anticipated interaction set

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that was described in Experiment 1 and was used in this experiment for all the subjects.

An important assumption of the theory is that irrelevant items are completely isolated in the network and do not have any interepisode paths connecting them to other items. Experiment 3 tests this assumption by adding incongruent items to the list. Srull (1981) has previously shown that incongruent items form associative links with other incongruent items and congruent items. But, in order to keep total list length constant, the number of incongruent and irrelevant items were confounded. Srull's model predicts that when the confound is eliminated, adding incongruent items to the list should increase the proportion of congruent items recalled but have no effect on the proportion of irrelevant items recalled. All of these predictions were confirmed in the experiment.

The final experiment in the series explored the order in which items were recalled and the time between the recall of an item and the one after it. Since irrelevant items are isolated in the network, Srull predicted that during retrieval, subjects would have to retreat to the person node at the highest level of the hierarchy after recalling an irrelevant item. Therefore, a high probability of recalling a congruent item after an irrelevant item should result since the superordinate cues embedded in the initial expectancy are very likely to elicit the retrieval of a congruent episode. This also means that the first item recalled has a high probability of being a congruent item. Also, it should take longer to retrieve the next item after an irrelevant item than after a congruent or

incongruent item since more paths must be traversed. Finally, interresponse times preceding the recall of irrelevant items should be longer than those for congruent or incongruent items for the same reason and these predictions were confirmed in the experiment.

### Situation-Specific Expectancies

In general, these data support Srull's model. However, all the expectancies which have been used in experiments to support the model have been general expectancies. In real life, we often gain an expectancy about a target person in a particular situation. For example, a student may gain an expectancy that a particular teacher is unkind as a result of the student's failure to obtain a passing grade. This student may not necessarily think that the teacher is unkind at home with the rest of the family. If the student's expectancy does not generalize from a school situation to a home situation, there will be no "home" expectancy and consequently, no congruent or incongruent items. Thus, if the student observes the teacher in a home situation, the student may not be able to recall incongruent (kind) behaviors better than congruent (unkind) behaviors as the model predicts. In fact, there may be an equal probability of recalling the different kinds of behaviors.

In sum, people can obtain expectancies about other people in the context of a specific situation. If these expectancies generalize, Srull's model should accurately predict the relative amounts of different types of information which should be recalled even if the expectancy was obtained in a specific situation. However, the model should make inaccurate predictions if such



expectancies are situation-specific and do not generalize. Therefore, the purpose of this experiment is to see whether expectancies are situation-specific and to adjust the model accordingly.

#### Method

Subjects. Seventy-two male and female introductory psychology students participated in the experiment. Participation partially fulfilled a course requirement.

Materials. Thirty-six behavior statements were used. Half of these statements dealt with a target person's (Joe) behavior at home and the rest dealt with Joe's behavior at work. Each group of behavior statements was divided into three subgroups of six kind behaviors, six unkind behaviors, and six irrelevant behaviors. These thirty-six behavior statements were chosen from a set of forty-eight behavior statements on the basis of subjects' ratings of the degree of congruency, incongruency, or irrelevancy of the statements in a preliminary study.

Design. The experimental design was a 2 x 6 x 6 mixed factorial with two between-subject factors and one within-subject factor. The between-subject factors were the type of orienting task (memory set vs. impression set) and the type of expectancy (home-kind vs. home-unkind vs. work-kind vs. work-unkind vs. general-kind vs. general-unkind). The within-subject factor was item type (home-kind vs. home-unkind vs. home-irrelevant vs. work-kind vs. work-unkind vs. work-irrelevant). The expectancy factor refers to whether the target person was kind or unkind at home or work when the expectancy

was formed. Also, there is a general expectancy condition in which the expectancy is not situation-specific. The item type factor refers to the actual behavior statements that were used. For example, the statement, "Joe yelled at the secretary for making the coffee too strong," is incongruent with the expectancy that Joe is kind at work.

Procedure. The subjects in the memory set condition were instructed to remember the behavioral information as well as possible and told that they would later be asked to recall its basic content. The subjects in the impression set condition were told to form an impression of what the target person was like and that they would later be asked to make some simple judgements about that person. Each expectancy (kind or unkind) was situation-specific depending on condition. For example, subjects in the "at home" condition were told that the target person was described by his family as being kind and friendly. The subjects in the general expectancy condition were given an expectancy that was not situation-specific.

All the subjects were run through the experiment in groups of five and they were paced through the thirty-six items at a rate of five seconds per item. All of the subjects were given a delay of five minutes (they wrote down the names of the states in America) before being asked to recall the items. This manipulation was used to eliminate any recency effects. The items recalled were written by the subjects and scored later by a "lenient" criterion. In other words the subjects only had to recall the basic content of the

items.

## Results

### Free Recall

The free-recall data were scored according to a lenient "general meaning" criterion by a judge blind to all experimental conditions. Previous research has indicated that this procedure can be used with near perfect reliability (Srull, 1981; Srull and Brand, 1983). Also comparable to other studies that have used behavioral items (Hastie and Kumar, 1979; Srull, 1983; Srull et al., 1984), an extremely small number of intrusions was found in the present data set.

The total number of items recalled was analyzed as a function of two between-subject and one within-subject factors. The between-subject factors were the type of orienting task (memory set vs. impression set) and the type of expectancy (home-kind vs. home-unkind vs. work-kind vs. work-unkind vs. general-kind vs. general-unkind). The within-subject factor was item type (home-kind vs. home-unkind vs. home-irrelevant vs. work-kind vs. work-unkind vs. work-irrelevant). Thus, for purposes of analysis the design was considered a 2 x 6 x 6 mixed factorial with six subjects randomly assigned to each cell.

The main effect of orienting task was not significant,  $F(1, 360) = 1.53$ ,  $p > 0.20$ , nor did this variable enter into any interactions. The mean number of home-kind, home-unkind, home-irrelevant, work-kind, work-unkind, and work-irrelevant items recalled are presented in Table 1 as a function of the expectancy

condition.

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 Insert Table 1 about here  
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There was a significant main effect of item type,  $F(5, 360) = 41.48$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , but this was qualified by an important interaction between item type and the expectancy condition,  $F(25, 360) = 14.23$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . Since there are six levels associated with each of these variables, the nature of this interaction is best understood by examining how the pattern of recall associated with each item type changes across the various expectancy conditions.

Figure 3 presents the mean number of home-kind, home-unkind, home-irrelevant, work-kind, work-unkind, and work-irrelevant items recalled as a function of the two "home" expectancy conditions. There are a number of things to note about these data. Under the home-kind expectancy condition, subjects recalled a greater number of home-unkind than home-kind items, and a greater number of home-kind than home-irrelevant items. Post-hoc significance tests using Newman-Keuls procedures indicate that each difference is significant at  $p < 0.01$ . In contrast, under the home-unkind expectancy condition, subjects recalled more of the "incongruent" home-kind than "congruent" home-unkind items ( $p < 0.01$ ), and more of the home-unkind than home-irrelevant items ( $p < 0.01$ ). This pattern of results essentially replicates findings previously reported by Srull (1981; Srull et al., 1984). Incongruent items are best recalled and irrelevant items are most poorly recalled.

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 Insert Figure 3 about here  
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The recall levels associated with the various "work" items are also interesting. There is no difference in the recall probabilities associated with these items as a function of whether they are kind, unkind, or irrelevant and these levels of recall do not change as a function of the expectancy condition. These data indicate that the initial expectancy is clearly situation-specific. As such, the data are inconsistent with models which suggest that such "incongruity effects" are simply due to an evaluative inconsistency between the item and the expectancy (Wyer and Gordon, 1982). If this were true, the kind and unkind items should show the same pattern regardless of whether they are associated with home or work. In terms of associative network theory, these data would suggest that home-irrelevant items become isolated in the final representational structure, and this accounts for why they are so poorly recalled relative to the other "relevant" (i.e., home-kind or home-unkind) items. In contrast, the "work" items appear to form a relatively undifferentiated network, and thus their recall does not vary as a function of whether they are kind, unkind, or irrelevant (see Srull et al., 1984 for an explication of how this might occur).

Figure 4 presents the mean number of home-kind, home-unkind, home-irrelevant, work-kind, work-unkind, and work-irrelevant items recalled as a function of the two "work" expectancy conditions. For the most part, this is the mirror image of the previous figure.

Under the work-kind expectancy condition, the work-unkind items are recalled better than the work-kind items ( $p < 0.01$ ), and these in turn are better recalled than the work-irrelevant items ( $p < 0.01$ ). Under the work-unkind expectancy condition, the work-kind items are better recalled than the work-unkind items ( $p < 0.01$ ), and these in turn are better recalled than the work-irrelevant items ( $p < 0.01$ ). As before, there are no significant differences among the "home" items, either as a function of evaluative tone or as a function of the expectancy condition. Thus, again there is a clear situation-specific expectancy effect, with incongruent items best recalled and irrelevant items most poorly recalled.

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 Insert Figure 4 about here  
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Figure 5 shows data relevant to the "general" expectancy conditions. Under these conditions, a quite different pattern emerges. In particular, subjects receiving both the general-kind and general-unkind expectancy show better recall of incongruent than congruent items, and better recall of the congruent than irrelevant items (all differences are significant at least at  $p < 0.05$ ). This is true regardless of whether the items pertain to home or work. These data extend the findings previously reported by Srull (1981; Srull et al., 1984) and Hastie (1984) by showing that incongruity effects will not only be obtained for behaviors pertaining to a single trait dimension, but also for behaviors performed in distinctly different situational contexts. On the other hand, this

requires that the initial expectancy be a general one rather than situation-specific in nature.

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 Insert Figure 5 about here  
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#### Ratings of the Target Person

Based on normative data reported by Srull and Wyer (1979, 1980), the traits kind, considerate, thoughtful, hostile, unfriendly, and dislikable were assumed to be denotatively related to the kernel trait dimension of kind. Ratings on these scales were therefore summed (after appropriate reverse scoring) to provide a single index of the target's perceived kindness. Six other traits, boring, selfish, narrow-minded, dependable, interesting, and intelligent were found by Srull and Wyer (1979, 1980) to be evaluatively loaded but descriptively unrelated to kindness. Ratings along these dimensions were therefore summed (after appropriate reverse scoring) to provide a single index of global evaluation.

Table 2 presents the mean ratings of the target along kindness-related dimensions as a function of orienting task and type of expectancy. Comparable ratings for the evaluatively similar dimensions are presented in Table 3. Statistical analyses indicate that there are no significant differences in either case. Treating type of judgement as a within-subject variable also produced no difference. Thus, denotatively-related and evaluatively-related dimensions elicited the same type of ratings.

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Insert Tables 2 and 3 about here  
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### Discussion

The data which have been obtained clearly indicate that expectancies can be situation-specific or general. Previous models (e.g. Hastie and Kumar, 1979; Srull et al., 1984) can explain incongruency effects only when the expectancy is a general one. When the expectancy is situation-specific in nature, these models are inadequate, thus indicating a need for some refinements in working toward a complete model of person memory.

The Srull model explains incongruity effects by assuming that incongruent items are compared with other relevant (congruent or incongruent) items, thereby resulting in an elaborate associative network. However, the present research suggests some constraints on this assumption. It is clear that social expectancies will often be general ones; but, as the results of the present study indicate, they can also be situation-specific. If the expectancy is situation-specific, the items must be congruent or incongruent to a situation which is relevant to the expectancy for incongruity effects to occur. Since situation-specific expectancies do not generalize to other situations, behaviors not occurring in the expectancy-relevant situation are neither congruent, incongruent, nor irrelevant to the expectancy. Consequently, there is no reason for people to compare these items to each other as the previous associative network theories suggest. For example, consider a



subject who gains an expectancy that a target person is kind at work. If the subject is given a list of the target person's behaviors at work, the subject will probably organize the behaviors into an associative network of the type proposed by Srull (Srull et al., 1984). However, a similar list of behaviors which the target performed at home, will elicit an undifferentiated recall pattern with respect to congruency, incongruency, and irrelevancy, thus indicating that inter-item associative links are not being formed.

In sum, a new associative network model is proposed to take situation-specific expectancies into account (see Figure 6). If some of the behaviors are performed in the expectancy-relevant situation and the other items are relevant to another situation, the following associative links should be established. Associative links between a higher order person node (representing the target) and the situation nodes are established. In addition, item nodes are linked to situation nodes if the items are relevant to the situation (e.g. "work" items get linked to a "work" situation node). Inter-item associative links are formed between items which are relevant to the expectancy and the situation to which the expectancy refers. On the other hand, few inter-item associative links form between the items which occurred in the other situation. Thus, the item nodes which are connected to the expectancy-relevant situation node form an associative network with many inter-item associations; while the item nodes connected to the other situation node form a relatively undifferentiated network. The major factor, then, in determining which item nodes will have inter-item associative links connected to

them, is whether the situation in which these behaviors occurred happens to be the one specified by the expectancy.

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 Insert Figure 6 about here  
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While it is clear how situation-specific expectancies should be represented in a . associative network model, the representation of general expectancies poses an interesting challenge. At least two representations seem to account equally well for the present data. In principle, however, these models are empirically distinguishable from each other. The first of these models is similar to the one proposed by Srull (Srull et al., 1984). Each item node is linked to a higher order person node, and inter-item associations are made according to the consistency, inconsistency, or irrelevancy of the item. Note that no situation nodes are postulated in this particular model (see Figure 7).

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 Insert Figure 7 about here  
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The second possible general expectancy representation postulates the existence of situation nodes such that associative links connect them to a higher order person node. In addition, item nodes are linked to situation nodes if the items are relevant to the situation (e.g. "home" items are linked to a "home" situation node). Inter-item associations are formed between items which occurred in a particular situation, but not between items which occurred in

different situations. Thus, the first model postulates inter-item associative links between items regardless of the situation in which the behaviors occurred; while according to the second model, these inter-item associations form only when the items occur in the same situation (see Figure 8).

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 Insert Figure 8 about here  
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The above general expectancy models can be tested in at least three different ways. The second model predicts that the items recalled will be clustered by situation, while the first model does not. Conditional probabilities can also be used to test the models. The first model predicts that the probability of recalling an incongruent work item after recalling an incongruent home item is the same as the probability of recalling an incongruent home item after recalling another incongruent home item. On the other hand, the second model does not postulate the formation of inter-item associative links between items which occurred in different situations, and thus makes different predictions. Specifically, this model predicts that the probability of recalling an incongruent home item after recalling another incongruent home item is greater than the probability of recalling an incongruent work item after recalling an incongruent home item.

Another way of testing these models is to measure the time it takes to recall a particular kind of item given that another kind of item was previously recalled. The first model predicts that the time

it takes to recall an incongruent home item given that another incongruent home item was previously recalled should be the same as the time it takes to recall an incongruent work item after recalling an incongruent home item. According to the second model, to recall an incongruent work item given that an incongruent home item was previously recalled, the subject must traverse the associative network starting from the incongruent home item node and finishing on the incongruent work item node. En route, the subject must go up to the higher order person node via the home situation node, and then down to the incongruent work item node via the work situation node. Thus, many paths must be traversed and the interresponse time should be large. This is not true when going from one incongruent home node to another. Therefore, the interresponse time between the recall of two incongruent home items should be less than the interresponse time between the recall of an incongruent home item and an incongruent work item.

The same data which indicate that expectancies may be situation-specific, are also inconsistent with models (e.g. Wyer and Gordon, 1982) which suggest that incongruity effects are simply due to an evaluative inconsistency between the behavior and the expectancy. If such models were true, recall data obtained from subjects who were given "work" expectancies would have shown the same incongruity effects for "home" items as for "work" items. Conversely, data from subjects who received a "home" expectancy would have shown incongruity effects for "work" items as well as for "home" items. Since these effects were only elicited from items

which occurred in the expectancy-relevant situation, evaluative inconsistency is probably not the only important factor in the production of incongruity effects. It appears that some kind of descriptive consistency is necessary for incongruity effects to occur. For this experiment, the descriptive consistency is simply that the expectancy and the items had a particular situation (e.g. "at work" or "at home") in common. However, subsequent research should examine the precise boundary conditions under which descriptive consistency or inconsistency is likely to play an important role.

Previous researchers (Hastie and Kumar, 1979; Srull et al., 1984) have found that subjects differentially recall congruent, incongruent, and irrelevant items under impression set conditions, but not under memory set conditions. The usual explanation is that memory set subjects do not attempt to integrate the information, and therefore do not form inter-item associative links between the episodes.

In this experiment, however, the data from the memory set subjects was similar to the data from the subjects in the impression set condition. This was true with respect to both the overall levels of recall and the likelihood of recalling congruent, incongruent, and irrelevant items. There are, of course, many possible reasons for this. The simplest explanation, however, is that memory set subjects tried to form an impression of the target person even though they were not told to do so. This explanation may also account for the lack of effects in the judgement data between memory

set and impression set subjects.

One finding which is particularly interesting, is that recall had no effect on judgements. This finding is consistent with past research (Lichtenstein and Srull, in press; Srull and Wyer, 1983) which indicates that there is no correspondence between recall and judgement under impression set conditions. In fact, it is often found that judgments are a function of what is presented, not what is recalled (see e.g., Hastie and Kumar, 1979). Since the same items were presented to all subjects, one might not expect to find any differences. If memory set subjects were indeed forming impressions, then the same judgement patterns should hold for both memory and impression set subjects. Since this is what happened, it seems likely that memory set subjects did attempt to form impressions and that recall does not affect judgements under impression set conditions.

### Conclusion

Expectancies have been found to be general or situation-specific and a model of person memory has been proposed to account for this finding. The model, although it accounts for much more data, is similar to other models of person memory (e.g. Hastie and Kumar, 1979; Srull et al., 1984). While the model makes a new assumption about encoding, given a situation-specific expectancy, the fundamental assumptions about storage and retrieval are the same as those in other models. These other models have had a high degree of heuristic value and have generated a great deal of research. It

is hoped that the model proposed in the present paper will be equally successful in stimulating researchers to investigate the many unresolved issues that remain in the area of memory and social judgement. Many pieces of the puzzle have already been discovered. Carefully grooming the edges, as well as fitting the pieces together, will provide a major challenge to future investigators.

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Table 1

Mean Number of Each Item Type Recalled  
as a Function of Type of Expectancy

<u>Type of Item</u>	<u>Expectancy</u>					
	Home- Kind	Home- Unkind	Work- Kind	Work- Unkind	General- Kind	General- Unkind
Home- Kind	2.17	4.25	2.25	1.75	2.00	3.92
Home- Unkind	4.17	1.75	2.00	1.67	4.00	1.92
Home- Irrelevant	.083	0.92	2.08	1.75	0.92	0.83
Work- Kind	1.92	2.00	2.00	4.00	1.42	4.00
Work- Unkind	1.83	2.00	4.17	2.00	3.08	2.00
Work- Irrelevant	1.83	1.92	1.08	0.75	0.75	1.08

Table 2

Mean Ratings of the Target Along Dimensions  
Denotatively Related to Kindness as a  
Function of Orienting Task and  
Type of Expectancy

<u>Expectancy</u>	<u>Orienting Task</u>	
	<u>Memory Set</u>	<u>Impression Set</u>
Home-Kind	4.67	3.83
Home-Unkind	3.67	4.50
Work-Kind	4.34	3.50
Work-Unkind	4.83	4.34
General-Kind	3.67	4.17
General-Unkind	3.50	4.34

Table 3

Mean Ratings of the Target Along Dimensions  
Evaluatively Related to Kindness as a  
Function of Orienting Task  
and Type of Expectancy

<u>Expectancy</u>	<u>Orienting Task</u>	
	<u>Memory Set</u>	<u>Impression Set</u>
Home-Kind	4.00	4.17
Home-Unkind	3.67	3.83
Work-Kind	4.17	4.33
Work-Unkind	3.83	4.00
General-Kind	3.67	3.33
General-Unkind	4.67	3.50

### Figure Captions

Figure 1. An associative network model of person memory by Hastie.

Figure 2. An associative network model of person memory by Brull.

Figure 3. The mean number of home-kind, home-unkind, home-irrelevant, work-kind, work-unkind, and work-irrelevant items recalled as a function of the two "home" expectancy conditions.

Figure 4. The mean number of home-kind, home-unkind, home-irrelevant, work-kind, work-unkind, and work-irrelevant items recalled as a function of the two "work" expectancy conditions.

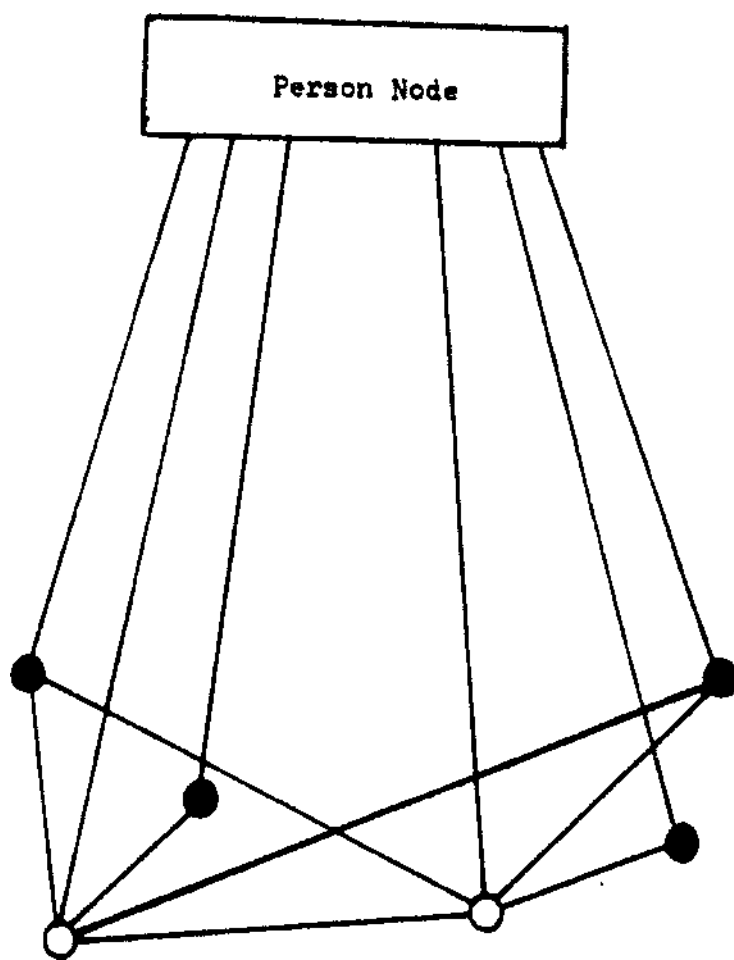
Figure 5. The mean number of home-kind, home-unkind, home-irrelevant, work-kind, work-unkind, and work-irrelevant items recalled as a function of the two "general" expectancy conditions.

Figure 6. An associative network model of person memory for an expectancy that the target person is kind at home.

Figure 7. An associative network model of person memory for a general expectancy that the target person is kind (first general expectancy model).

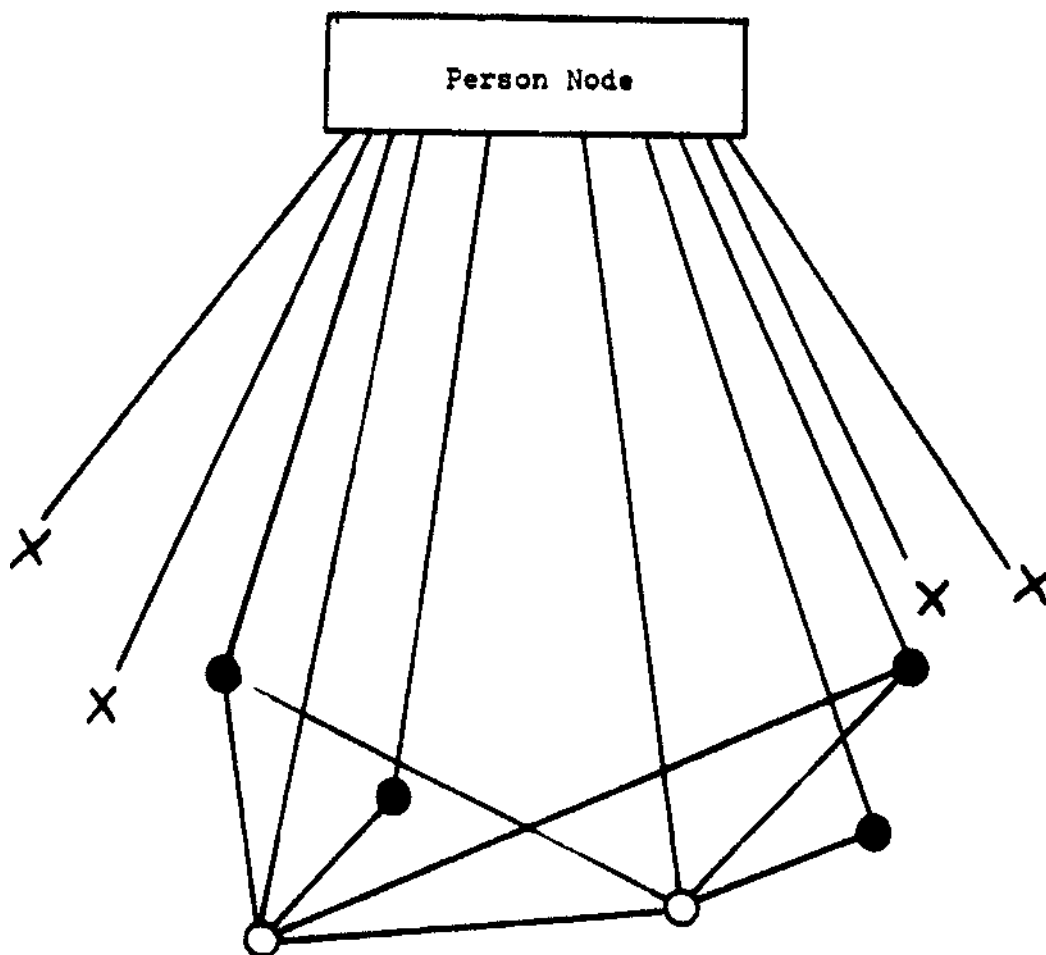
### Figure Captions

Figure 8. An associative network model of person memory for a general expectancy that the target person is kind (second general expectancy model).



- Congruent Item Node
- Incongruent Item Node



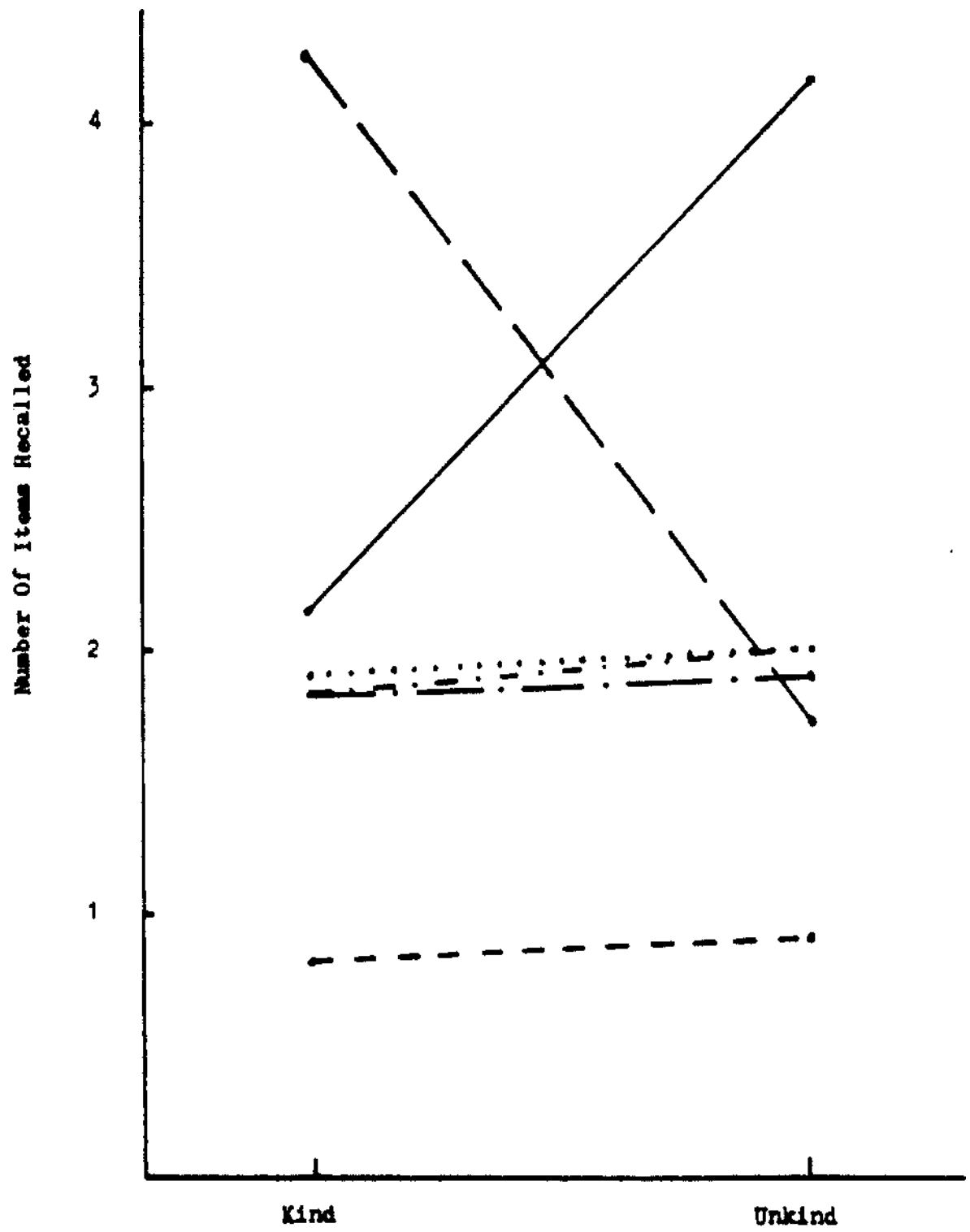


- Congruent Item Node
- Incongruent Item Node
- × Irrelevant Item Node

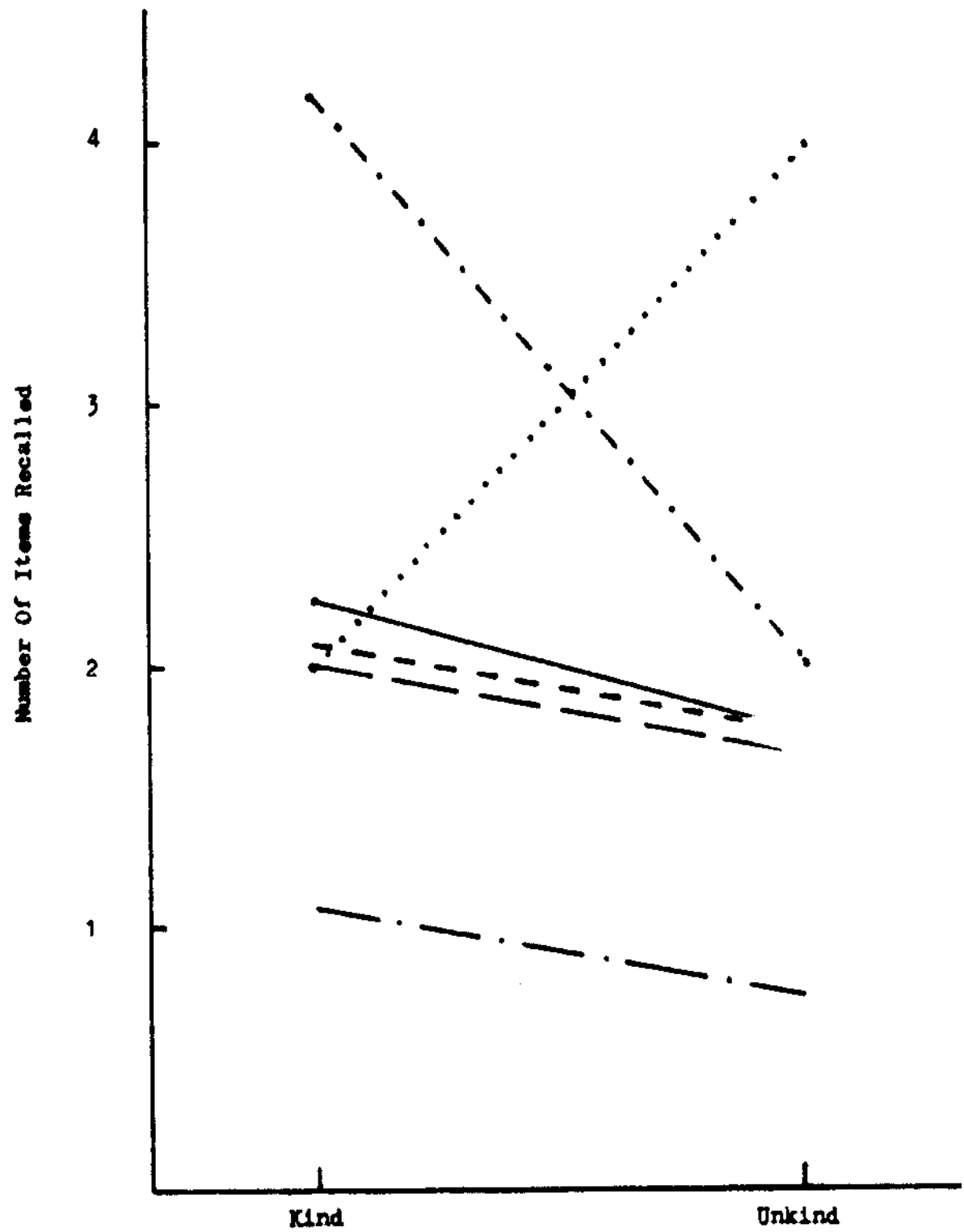
Legend For  
Figures 3, 4, and 5

—————	Home Kind
——— ——— ———	Home Unkind
- - - - -	Home Irrelevant
. . . . .	Work Kind
- . - . - . -	Work Unkind
——— . ——— .	Work Irrelevant

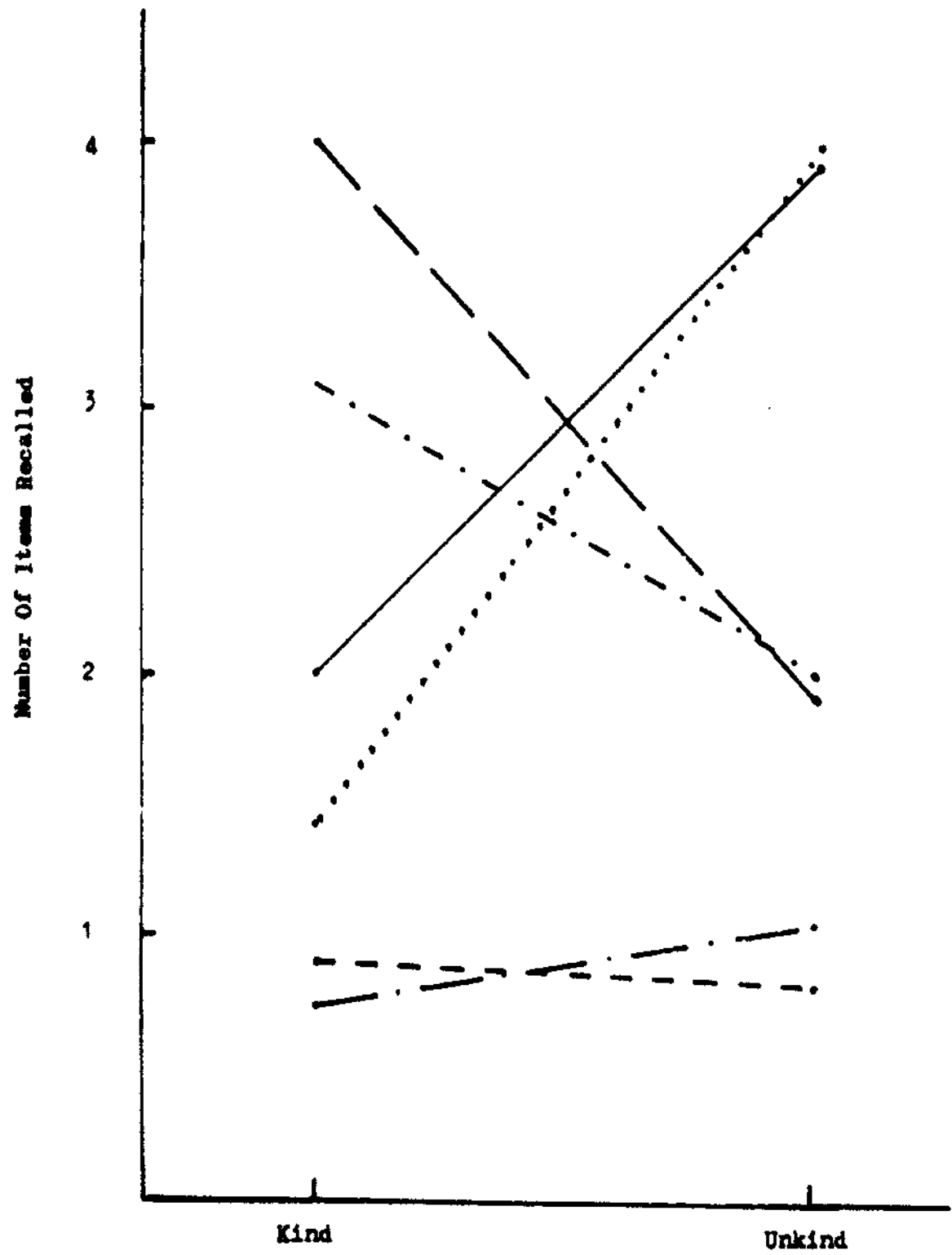
# Home Expectancy

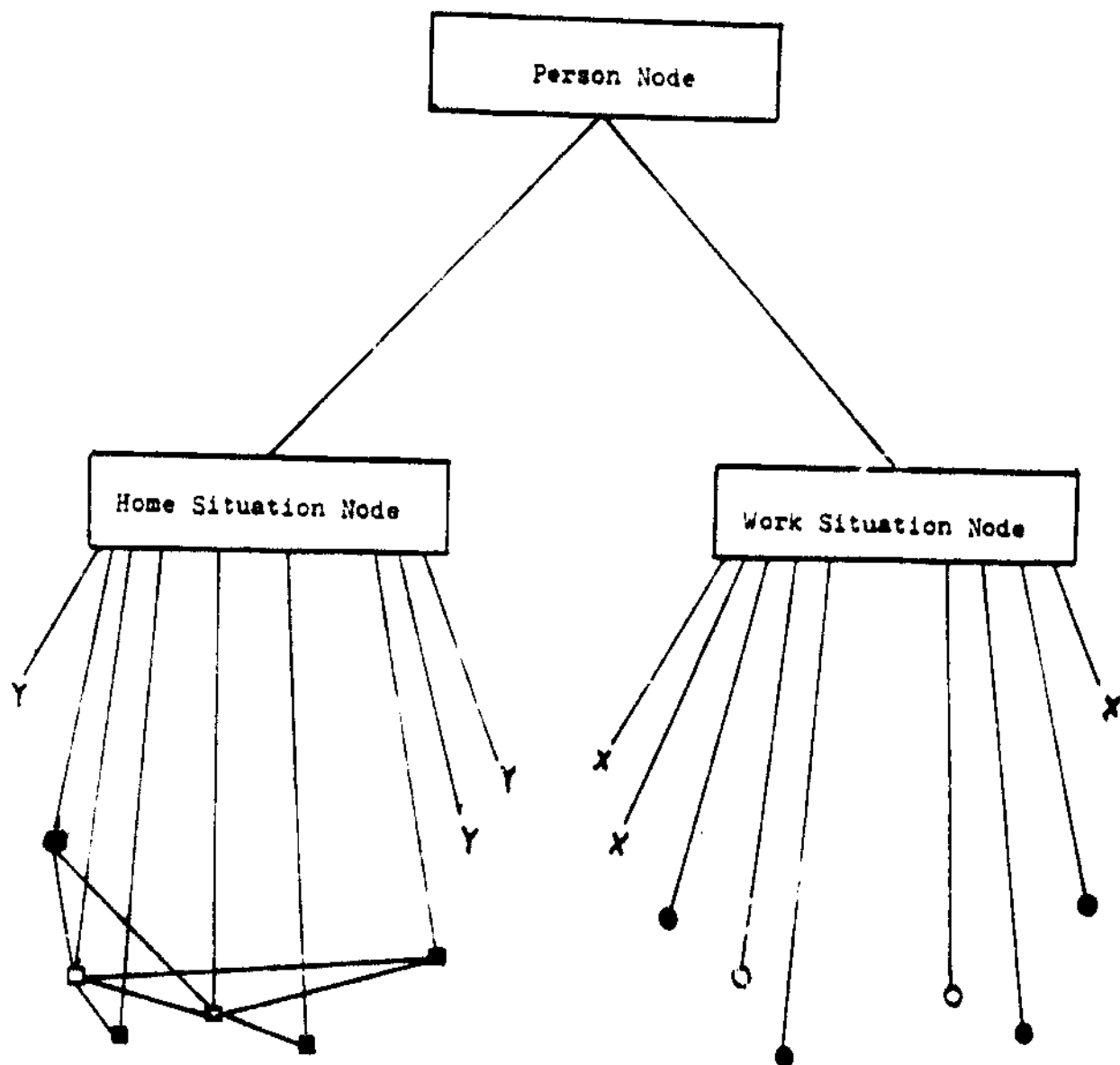


Work Expectancy

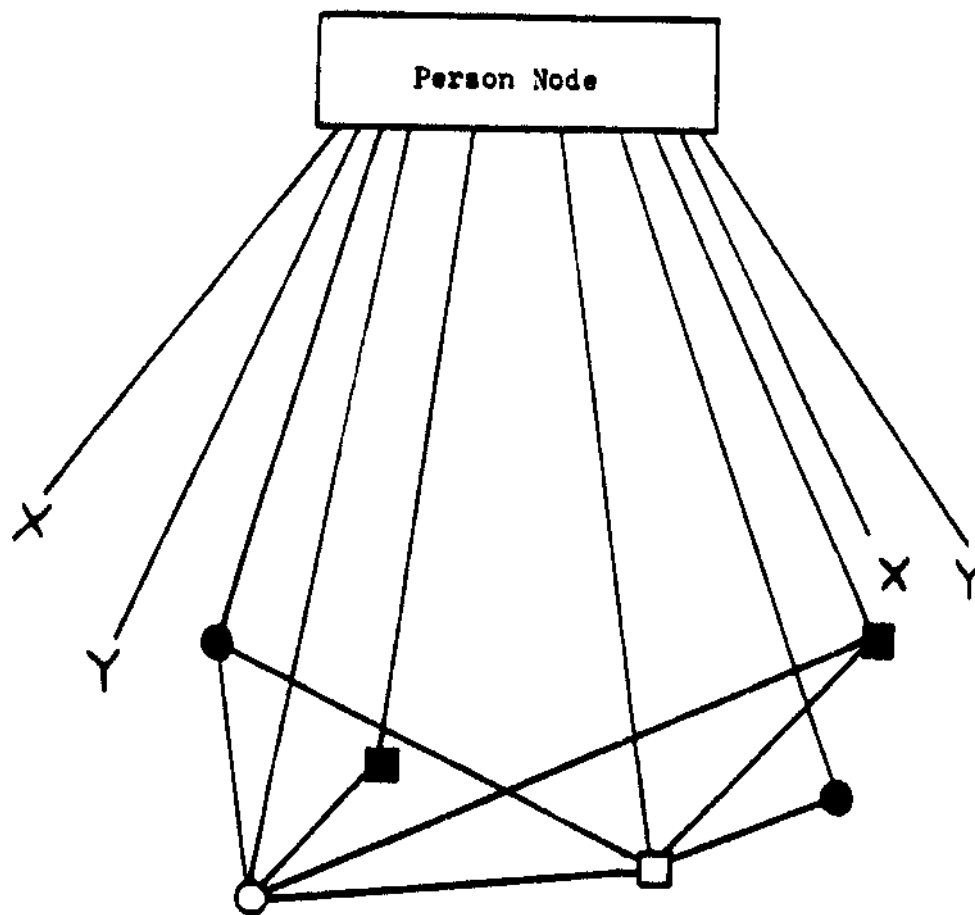


# Generalized Expectancy

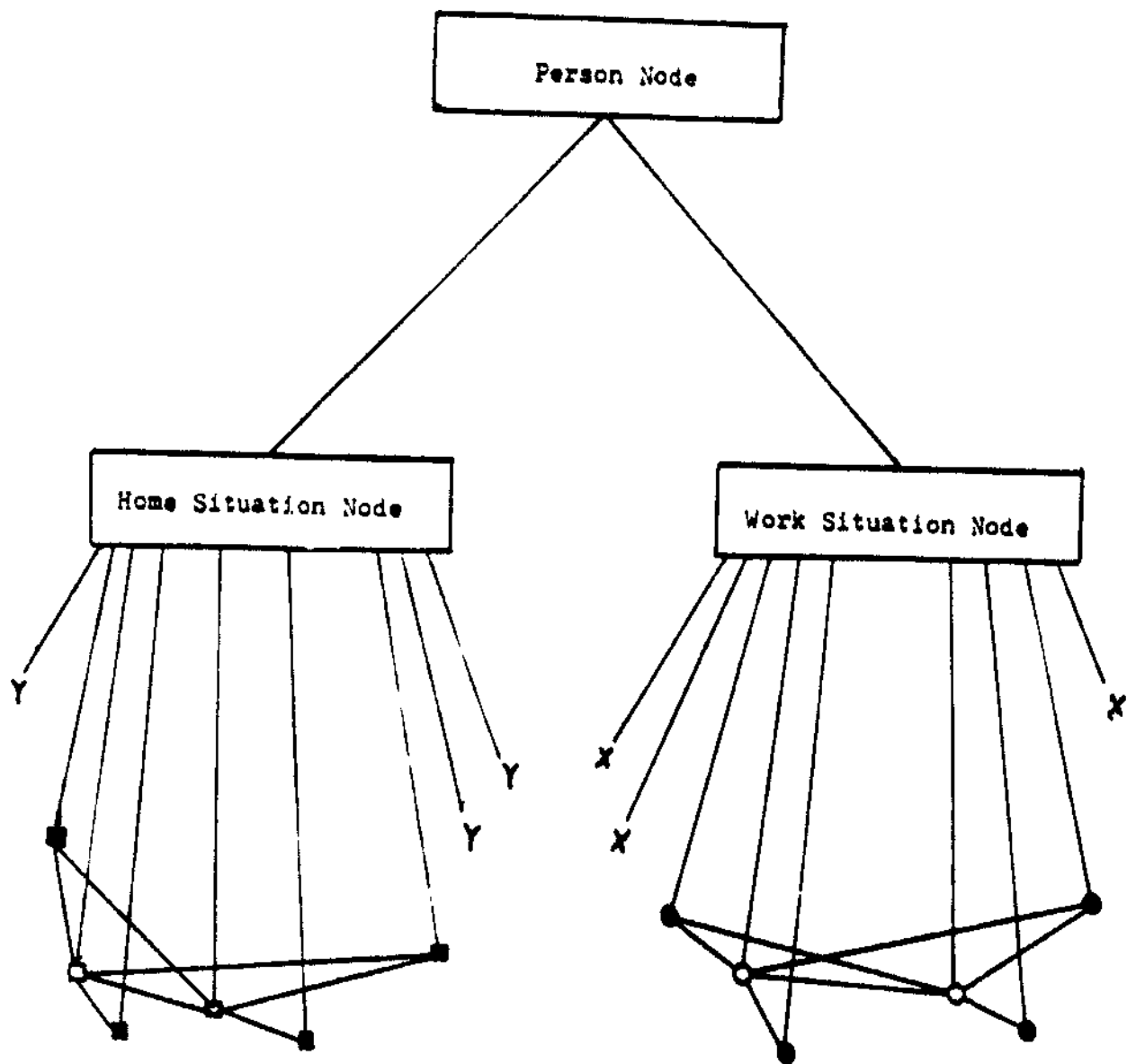




- Kind-Home Item Node
- Unkind-Home Item Node
- Y Irrelevant-Home Item Node
- Kind-Work Item Node
- Unkind-Work Item Node
- X Irrelevant-Work Item Node



- Kind-Home Item Node
- Unkind-Home Item Node
- Y Irrelevant-Home Item Node
- Kind-Work Item Node
- Unkind-Work Item Node
- X Irrelevant-Work Item Node



- Kind-Home Item Node
- Unkind-Home Item Node
- Y Irrelevant-Home Item Node
- Kind-Work Item Node
- Unkind-Work Item Node
- X Irrelevant-Work Item Node



## Appendix A

The instructions that the subjects were given were contained in Appendix A. There were six impression set instructions and six memory set instructions.

## Impression Set Condition

One of the things that psychologists are interested in is the way in which we observe and think about different types of people. This involves many psychological processes and the experiment you will participate in today is concerned with several of these.

You will be presented with a list of 30 behaviors. Each of these behaviors was performed by a person named Joe Harrison. People in Joe's family describe Joe as being much more kind and friendly than the average person. He tends to do nice things for people and behave in a generally kind manner.

Your task is to listen to a list of 30 behaviors and attempt to form a coherent impression of what Joe would be like. After this list has been presented, you will be asked several questions about your impression of Joe.

One behavior will be presented every 6 seconds. After each 6 second interval, the next behavior will be presented. When the entire list has been presented, you will not be permitted to hear about the behaviors a second time.

## Impression Set Condition

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Your task is to listen to a list of 30 behaviors and attempt to form a coherent impression of what Joe would be like. After this list has been presented, you will be asked several questions about your impression of Joe.

One behavior will be presented every 6 seconds. After each 6 second interval, the next behavior will be presented. When the entire list has been presented, you will not be permitted to hear about the behaviors a second time.

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Your task is to listen to a list of 30 behaviors and attempt to form a coherent impression of what Joe would be like. After this list has been presented, you will be asked several questions about your impression of Joe.

One behavior will be presented every 6 seconds. After each 6 second interval, the next behavior will be presented. When the entire list has been presented, you will not be permitted to hear about the behaviors a second time.

## Impression Set Condition

One of the things that psychologists are interested in is the way in which we observe and think about different types of people. This involves many psychological processes and the experiment you will participate in today is concerned with several of these.

You will be presented with a list of 30 behaviors. Each of these behaviors was performed by a person named Joe Harrison. Joe tends to be much more kind and friendly than the average person. He tends to do nice things for people and behave in a generally kind manner.

Your task is to listen to a list of 30 behaviors and attempt to form a coherent impression of what Joe would be like. After this list has been presented, you will be asked several questions about your impression of Joe.

One behavior will be presented every 6 seconds. After each 6 second interval, the next behavior will be presented. When the entire list has been presented, you will not be permitted to hear about the behaviors a second time.

## Impression Set Condition

One of the things that psychologists are interested in is the way in which we observe and think about different types of people. This involves many psychological processes and the experiment you will participate in today is concerned with several of these.

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Your task is to listen to a list of 30 behaviors and attempt to form a coherent impression of what Joe would be like. After this list has been presented, you will be asked several questions about your impression of Joe.

One behavior will be presented every 6 seconds. After each 6 second interval, the next behavior will be presented. When the entire list has been presented, you will not be permitted to hear about the behaviors a second time.

## Memory Set Condition

One of the things psychologists are interested in is the way in which we observe and think about different types of people. This involves many psychological processes and the experiment you will participate in today is concerned with several of these.

You will be presented with a list of 30 behaviors. Each of these behaviors was performed by a person named Joe Harrison. People in Joe's family describe Joe as being much more kind and friendly than the average person. He tends to do nice things for people and behave in a generally kind manner.

Your task is to listen to a list of 30 behaviors and attempt to remember them as well as possible. You need not remember the exact words, but after the list has been presented, you will be asked to recall each of the 30 behaviors in your own words.

Each behavior will be presented every 6 seconds. After each 6 second interval, the next behavior will be presented. When the entire list has been presented, you will not be permitted to hear about the behaviors a second time.



## Memory Set Condition

One of the things psychologists are interested in is the way in which we observe and think about different types of people. This involves many psychological processes and the experiment you will participate in today is concerned with several of these.

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Each behavior will be presented every 6 seconds. After each 6 second interval, the next behavior will be presented. When the entire list has been presented, you will not be permitted to hear about the behaviors a second time.

## Memory Set Condition

One of the things psychologists are interested in is the way in which we observe and think about different types of people. This involves many psychological processes and the experiment you will participate in today is concerned with several of these.

You will be presented with a list of 30 behaviors. Each of these behaviors was performed by a person named Joe Harrison. The people who Joe works with describe Joe as being much more kind and friendly than the average person. He tends to do nice things for people and behave in a generally kind manner.

Your task is to listen to a list of 30 behaviors and attempt to remember them as well as possible. You need not remember the exact words, but after the list has been presented, you will be asked to recall each of the 30 behaviors in your own words.

Each behavior will be presented every 6 seconds. After each 6 second interval, the next behavior will be presented. When the entire list has been presented, you will not be permitted to hear about the behaviors a second time.

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## Appendix B

The items that the subjects were given are contained in Appendix B.

### Behavioral Items

1. Joe yelled at the secretary because the coffee was too strong.
2. Joe listened to Mozart's clarinet concerto because it was his favorite record.
3. Joe served the whole family breakfast in bed to show how much he appreciated them.
4. Joe watched the soccer game on T.V.
5. Joe gave flowers to the typist.
6. Joe hit his wife because she bought a new dress.
7. Joe kicked his crippled mother out of the house.
8. Joe read Hamlet because he liked English plays.
9. Joe spanked his son for talking loudly.
10. Joe took his daughter to see Swan Lake despite the fact that he hated ballet.
11. Joe sat on the couch to relax.
12. Joe hit one of his assistants for making a mistake.
13. Joe told his daughter that she couldn't leave the house until she cooked him a three course meal.
14. Joe played football with his son even though he was very tired.
15. Joe told his co-worker not to worry about his mistake.
16. Joe shut the kitchen window because it was cold outside.

17. Joe exhaled smoke from his cigar into the face of one of his competitors at a meeting.
18. Joe wore blue pants in his office.
19. Joe invited his lonely mother to stay with him instead of going to Europe as he had planned.
20. Joe gave Mrs. Jisher the day off so she could visit her aunt.
21. Joe left his briefcase on a chair in his office.
22. Joe gave an unemployed person a job as a stockboy despite having too many stockboys.
23. Joe yelled at his wife because she forgot to dust his trophy.
24. Joe took his son's class to the baseball game and bought them hot dogs.
25. Joe threatened to shoot the client if he ever came in again without an appointment.
26. Joe bought a toy for his secretary's son for his birthday.
27. Joe threw his pen into the garbage can because it ran out of ink.
28. Joe looked at the sign across the street from his office.
29. Joe dropped his notebook on the floor of his office.
30. Joe kicked an assistant in the leg to make her move faster.



## Appendix C

The judgement questionnaire which the subjects received is contained in Appendix C.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

As a final task, we would like to get your impressions of Joe by having you rate him along the dimensions listed below. Make your ratings along a scale from 0 (not at all) to 10 (extremely) for each item.

1. How LIKEABLE would you rate Joe? . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_
2. How UNFRIENDLY would you rate Joe? . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_
3. How INCONSIDERATE would you rate Joe?. . . . . \_\_\_\_\_
4. How KIND would you rate Joe? . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_
5. How THOUGHTFUL would you rate Joe? . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_
6. How HOSTILE would you rate Joe?. . . . . \_\_\_\_\_
7. How BORING would you rate Joe? . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_
8. How DEPENDABLE would you rate Joe? . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_
9. How INTERESTING would you rate Joe?. . . . . \_\_\_\_\_
10. How NARROW-MINDED would you rate Joe?. . . . . \_\_\_\_\_
11. How SELFISH would you rate Joe?. . . . . \_\_\_\_\_
12. How INTELLIGENT would you rate Joe?. . . . . \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D

The debriefing statement is contained in Appendix D.

### Debriefing

You have just participated in an experiment in social psychology. One of the things that social psychologists are interested in is how our perceptions of other people are influenced by our prior impressions of them.

In the present experiment, we were concerned with two specific issues. First, is memory for events that are consistent with our prior impressions better or worse than events that are consistent with such impressions? You may have noticed that some of the behaviors in the list were inconsistent with what you were originally led to expect.

The second question concerns whether we form single impressions or "mental representations" of other people, or whether our impressions are more situation specific. For example, is it possible to have one impression of how someone acts at work, and another for how they act at home? The present experiment should help us understand the psychological processes that are involved in forming such impressions in much greater detail.

If you would like to learn more about these issues, the following book, which is in the university library, will be very useful:

Hastie, R. et al. (eds.) Person memory. Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1980.

If you have any questions, or would like to discuss the experiment in more detail, feel free to contact Dr. Thomas K. Srull in Room 413.